

Washington, DC - Congressman Jeff Fortenberry today led a congressional hearing examining obesity in the United States. Panelists included the Director of Nutrition at the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Dr. William Dietz, who noted that 30 percent of American adults and 16 percent of American children are obese. Dietz also stated that 25 percent of increased U.S. health care costs from 1987 to 2001 were related to obesity.

“The increase in obesity nationwide has far-reaching effects in terms of public health and health care costs,” Fortenberry said. “I am very concerned by this trend, particularly among our children. Good nutrition, including a diet of fresh, locally-raised foods, can improve health outcomes and lower medical costs, a winning combination for American health care, sustainable agriculture, and strong local economies.”

Dr. Dietz, asked by Fortenberry about the benefits of fresh, local foods in promoting healthy habits, noted that a northern California fruits and vegetables program, based on a network of farmers markets proximate to health clinics, has produced positive outcomes for a health care provider' employees, patients, and local farmers.

In the 2008 Farm Bill, Fortenberry made it easier for schools and other public institutions to procure local foods for meal programs. He is the Ranking Member of the House Agriculture Committee' Department Operations, Oversight, Nutrition, and Forestry Subcommittee.

In his testimony, Dr. Dietz also outlined the CDC' six strategies to prevent and control obesity: increasing physical activity; increasing fruit and vegetable consumption; increasing breastfeeding initiation, duration, and exclusivity; decreasing TV viewing; decreasing consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages, and decreasing consumption of foods high in calories and low in nutritional value.

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